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PHILOSOPHY AND MORALS OF WAR.

BY MAX NORDAU.

I.

No war has met with such general condemnation as the war in the Transvaal. In cases of the clash of arms between two nations, disinterested spectators usually divide into two groups, taking sides with one or the other of the combatants. This phenomenon does not appear to arise in this case. Outside of the Anglo-Saxon world, not a single voice has been raised for England up to the present time. The sympathies of all are on the side of the Boers. Meanwhile, the different Governments are maintaining a proper attitude, observing strict neutrality and warning their people against a too violent manifestation of feelings. But public opinion, as it finds expression in the press and in meetings, is unrestrained, and overwhelms England with execrations more emphatic even than those used in past centuries against the arch enemy of Christendom—the Turk.

Whence this unanimity of hatred against England among the people of the European continent? The sentiment has a variety of roots. Some of these lie on the surface, others are more deeply concealed. Some originate from noble motives, others from fairly ignoble ones. When David and Goliath step into the ring, brutal realists will always bet on the giant; but knightly enthusiasts will pray for the success of his diminutive opponent. The fact that a tiny people faces death without hesitation to defend its independence against an enemy fabulously superior in number, or to die in the attempt, presents an aspect of moral beauty which no soul, attuned to higher things, will disregard. Even friends and admirers of England—yea, even the English themselves—strongly sense the pathos in the situation

of the Dutch Boers, who feel convinced that they are fighting for their national existence, and agree that it equals the pathos of Leonidas, William Tell, and Kosciusko. With many, partisanship for the Boers rests upon genuine abstract ethical grounds. With others these nobler grounds are pretexts disguising previously existing hatred of the British. Most of the nations envy England its enormous territorial possessions in all parts of the world; its wealth, its high cultural development, its freedom; some are jealous of its competition in the world's market; one or the other of the nations reproaches it with the fact that it desires no neighbor in its colonizings, and they all regard its racial pride as an offense to their egotism.

But one fundamental note resounds through all the different cries which voice the public opinion of Europe against England—resentment because of a lost illusion.

The war in the Transvaal follows the Peace Conference at The Hague without an interval; it therefore reacts upon the mind like a cruel satire upon it. The representatives of the Powers assembled with the solemn peal of bells and sweet music, and separated with a thundering of cannon at Glencoe and Ladysmith. A thousand entranced pens celebrated the peace manifesto of the Czar as the beginning of a new era in the world's history, and these now stand convicted of the fact that the thought of turning over a new leaf is still far from Clio's mind.

The disenchantment is the more humiliating, since the illusion was sincere in the case of but very few open admirers of the initiative of the Czar. There are few general manifestations of our times in which hypocrisy played so large a part as it did in the extravagant hymns of praise that greeted the call to the conference at The Hague. The fundamental principles upon which our civilization rests, the religious doctrines, the moral and judicial standards which we pretend to follow, logically require that war should be condemned and that one should pose as a disciple of peace. No man can serve God and Mammon. It is impossible to declare: "*Justitia regnorum fundamentum*" (justice is the foundation of kingdoms) and "Might is right" at one and the same time. To be confirmed as a Christian upon a catechism which teaches: "Love thy neighbor as thyself; Thou shalt love thine enemies," and to recognize methodical preparations for murder and arson as the chief duty of every well-

ordered government, are two incompatible things. But millions of people who indulge in conventional speeches as to their love of peace, know very well that their heart does not coincide with their lips. They were grateful to the Czar, since his manifesto seemed to take their alleged love of peace for good coin of the realm, and they felt complimented therein upon the high degree of culture which it apparently assumed in them, and they are vexed with England because its actions give the lie to their assertions of their love of peace before all white humanity. An unmasked hypocrite cannot be expected to be in good humor. It scarcely wrongs the Christian Powers, if it be surmised that not one of them—not even Russia—would have acted differently from England under the same circumstances. But they would not admit it. They want to have the semblance of respect for right and neighborly love preserved. England should have allowed some little time to elapse between the Conference at The Hague and the war in the Transvaal. It might have assumed the appearance of seeking mediation or arbitration, in which case it could have adjusted matters in such a way that the attempt at a peaceful solution should have proved a failure. England has done violence to international decorum. But a breach of etiquette, this most serious of all drawing-room sins, is as unpardonable with the political hypocrite as with his social counterpart.

II.

Is it not unfounded pessimism to assume in the heart of one's neighbors murder and robbery as general sentiments? Is it not calumny to denounce white humanity as a horde of war-like barbarians lightly coated with a veneer of rational civilization?

I do not believe it is. A comparison of the factors which practically labor for peace with those which prepare, justify and train humanity for war, will show the latter as having overwhelming preponderance. The number of the apostles of peace outside of individual poets, *literati*, artists and thinkers includes a few international and national societies, whose membership is not great, comprising but few representative men of the time. Sad but true. The official organs of these societies have an incomparably smaller circulation than the most insig-

nificant financial or sporting journal, and their periodical congresses attract far less attention than a floral exhibit or a cattle show. On the other hand, all organized powers of State and society are pronounced or tacit adherents of war.

Religion is not necessarily, or at all times, an advocate of peace. That the Old Testament is filled with a warlike spirit needs no proof. Jehovah is "The Lord of Hosts" and His commands to His people more frequently involve bloodshed than compromise. The prophet Isaiah is the first to feel a premonition of a better future, when "people will beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and nation will no longer lift up sword against nation." His God is no longer the angry God, who imposes the extermination of the Canaanites upon His people as a sacred duty. He is a loving father, who preaches: "Peace, peace—to those who are afar and to those who are near."

Christianity is indeed the religion of peace. Above the portals of the Church of Christ, the Christmas greeting of the angels, "Peace on earth and good will to men," glows as an inscription. This is theory. The practice of the Church is quite different. She has scarcely ever prevented war, and frequently pressed the sword into the hands of the faithful. In all the centuries of her sway, the Church has shed blood like water. She exterminated the Goths because of their Arianism, and she did what she could to prepare a similar fate for the Vandals and Lombards. In the Crusades she armed the Occident against the Orient, and sent hundreds or thousands, possibly millions, of pious Christians and brave Mahometans to their death. She unleashed Simon de Montfort's assassins like a pack of wolves against the Albigenses; she visited the Waldenses with fire and sword; she prepared the Night of St. Bartholomew for the Huguenots; and when she instigated neither foreign nor civil wars, she catered to the taste for the drama of human suffering and to the habit of bloodshed by the Inquisition and her Auto-da-Fes. In our day the Church has lost the power to set nation against nation, but she does not withhold her blessing from the banners of war; the hosts that march to the front are sped by her pious wishes, and she prays to God that He grant victory to the arms which she has blessed. In every country does the Church render this service to the native banners and arms, and

she does not seem to see that it is blasphemy to ask of the God of Love to look with favor upon murder and destruction; or to ask of the God of the Universe to take sides with one portion of His children against another portion; especially when she knows that that other portion is turning to God with exactly the same impudent request. Never yet has a clergyman had the common sense to say: "I refuse to pray for the victory of our arms. From the altars in the enemy's country this same prayer is rising to Heaven in this self-same hour, and to harken to both prayers, to grant victory to both hostile armies, lies beyond the pale of even God's Omnipotence." When, in the dispute over the Carolines, Prince Bismarck asked the Pope to act as arbitrator between Germany and Spain, Leo XIII. indeed declared that it was part of his office to make peace between Christian nations. But no head of a State Church has yet dared to answer the temporal authorities, who asked his blessing upon banner and host: "You desire war, and our God teaches peace. I cannot bless the hand armed to maim and kill men. If you must shed blood, do so; but do not mix God and His religion with your devil's work."

Islam does not claim to be a religion of peace. *Jehad* or Holy War is one of its fundamental institutions; but there is no need of stopping on this, since no one seeks the highest expression of human culture among the Mahometan peoples.

In justice, religion should not be rebuked that it does not raise a more decided voice against war. According to the religious concept, war is not so dreadful an evil as it is according to the materialistic concept. Why is war a horror? Because it inflicts misery upon men and because it destroys life. But the sufferings of war reach only the flesh, which is transitory, and what concerns the death of the body has little import for him who believes in the immortality of the soul and in the continuity of personality beyond the grave. There was no contradiction to her fundamental doctrines in the Church's maintaining that it was in the interests of religion that she instigated wars and revolutions. What is the loss of property, of bodily members, or even of life itself, in comparison with eternal salvation, which she could promise to him who fought for a good cause?

III.

The cause of peace has little to expect from the Church. She will pray and preach peace when the government of the State desires peace; and she will implore God for victory, she will bless the arms and praise death upon the battlefield to the troops as pleasing to God, when the government is carrying out a warlike policy. But religion also, which I distinguish from the Church, is not in itself an ally of peace. Whatever its ideals or theoretical dogmas may be, in practice it always savors of the opportune. It adapts itself to the attainment of the spirit of the age. It preaches words into which every nation and every individual puts the meaning corresponding to their own feelings, culture and comprehension. I do not say that religion does not gradually mold minds along the lines of its doctrines, but, on the other hand, it is likewise a fact that minds mold religion. When the Gospel was preached to Chlodwig, the King of the Franks, he had but one thought : "Ah, if I could but have been present at the crucifixion of Christ with my Franks, what havoc could I have wrought among those Romans and Jews !" In his warlike soul the religion of love aroused concepts of combat and murder only. The catechism which missionaries teach the negroes of Australia is the same from which the whites derive their knowledge of religion. No one will seriously maintain that the Australian negro fills the crystal vessel of the catechism with the same emotional and intellectual content as the white Christian. Instincts control intellect and polarize it in their own direction.

As in religion, so in the most intellectual of all intellects, Philosophy. This does not mold the feelings of men; it pleads for their intellectual authorization only; it finds reasons for them; it gives them methodical expression; it gathers them into a system. There are, of course, philosophers in every generation who strive for an objective verity and care little for the subjectivity of their contemporaries. But they are solitary dreamers, without perceptible influence upon the thought of the times. Whole nations honor as philosophers only those wise men and teachers who formulate, as reason and science, that which lives in the hearts of millions as sentiment. And since, unfortunately, the masses to-day still entertain violent and bloody instincts, almost all philosophers teach the justification, the necessity and even the morality and beauty of war.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century Abbé de Saint Pierre created a sensation with his "*Projet de Paix Éternelle*" (Plan for Eternal Peace). The book is a landmark in a century of rationalism. Saint Pierre fails, as did the encyclopedists after him, to allow for the instinctive bases of human nature; he deals only with the visible surface, with inane forms of speech, which man bandies on his lips, when his feelings are asleep. It seemed to him a very simple and easy matter to abolish war in a Congress of all Nations, and to establish a world-police, whose duty it should be to maintain eternal peace among the peoples. One hundred and seventy years later the Czar found it a trifle less easy to realize the thought of Saint Pierre. The latter's contemporary, Voltaire, was cruelly amused with him, and demonstrated in his entertaining critique upon his book how utterly unfamiliar the good Abbé was with the realties of human nature and of life. Rousseau was a friend of peace on principle; but he considered Saint Pierre's plan as impracticable, although it was sensible, or, rather, because it was sensible—"for," he said, "men are insane; it would furthermore be a sort of insanity to be the only sane man among the insane."

The French "nationalists" of to-day, who acknowledge themselves with candid brutality, as worshippers of Force; who, with M. Jules Lemaître, adore the "Sword of Salvation," and with M. G. Hanotaux, praise the murderers of the officers Klobb, Voulet and Chanoine as heroes, have tried to introduce Kant as a crown witness for their theory. M. Brunetière tried to prove that the Koenigsberg philosopher speaks a word for war, by citing a disconnected sentence from a work later on repudiated by Kant himself. This is false. The most recent number of "Kant-Studies" shows the hardy ignorance of M. Brunetière, and the true opinion of Kant, who actually condemns war as a crime, and desires to introduce the same judiciary forms between peoples as hold between individuals. John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte belong to the peace party among the philosophers.

On the other hand, Fichte is enthusiastic for war. And his "Speeches to the German Nation" are the chief source of the emotions which animated the German people in the wars of liberation. Hegel takes the same stand as Fichte. Since he teaches that everything that exists is rational, the logic of his own dogma compels him to find war rational, since it exists. But he goes fur-

ther than that; he declares that war is not only rational, but also beautiful and useful; it is the great reconstructor of humanity; the logic of his system does not compel him to go as far as that.

About the same time Xavier de Maistre wrote his fiery hymns in praise of war, which since have become the Gospel of all scrap-politicians, and whose arguments are to be found under the pen of all militarists, polished indeed, but deteriorated, like coins that have passed through many hands.

But the greatest authority of all advocates of war is Darwin. Gladly do they accept his "struggle for existence" as the fundamental law of all life and all progress; and they conclude that war is a mandate of Nature, which man can escape as little as he can the law of gravitation. I will not here discuss Darwin's theory. Neither need I show that, according to Darwin's concept, combat may assume moral and lovable forms; as in cases where the individuals of a species do not battle against one another, but turn against other species in loyal solidarity; or, in higher degrees of mental culture, against the inimical forces of nature; or, when the male bird woos the female and tries to outdo his rival by a more graceful dance-step, more beautiful song or a richer ornamentation of feathers. In such combats no blood is shed, no life is destroyed. They develop the best qualities of the combatants, and at best produce some slight distress in the egotism of the conquered. In this way, however, the pseudo-Darwinian philosophers and politicians do not understand the "struggle for existence." They always impart to the word of Darwin the sense of the prize-fighter and the gladiator and subject the history of mankind to the law of the jungle. As Christians, as citizens of communities theoretically based upon right, they felt hitherto that a sense of decorous duty impelled them to simulate a love of peace and to weep a few crocodile tears over war as a necessary evil. But since the theory of evolution has been promulgated, they can cover their natural barbarism with the name of Darwin and proclaim the sanguinary instincts of their inmost hearts as the last word of science.

Only this faintly veiled foundation of savagery can explain the fact that the ravings of Nietzsche, an insane man, suffering with psychic paresis, which finally paralyzed the enfeebled brain entirely, could be enthroned as the philosophy of fashion. Nietzsche thinks that he is an opponent of Darwin, but, in real-

ity, his work is but a parody on Darwin's theory misunderstood. And this by reason of grotesque exaggerations. "The Over-Man"—"the free-roving blond beast"—"all is allowable"—"the laughing lion"—"on the other side of good and evil"—"the morals of the classes"—these prison formulae, these shibboleths of brigandage harmonized too well with the most secret sentiments of the red-skins in dresscoat and uniform, wherewith alleged white humanity teems, not to be greeted by them with joy as the highest form of revelation.

IV.

It seems to me that the cause of peace is not being defended with proper arguments on right ground. Mr. Herbert Spencer regards the history of civilization as an evolution from war to industrialism and uses these two conditions as antitheses. They are not necessarily such. War is not abrogated by resting the entire existence of a people upon commerce and trade. If industrialism is really to mean the end of war, an equality of evolution must exist between all peoples who have reached the industrial phase of civilization. But, within the limits of calculable time, this is a greater Utopia than eternal peace through general altruism. As long as there are Free-Trade and Protection States, advanced and retarded nations, industry is also open to the temptation to handle tools and swords alternately, and to open markets, which threaten to close, or are monopolized by rivals, by force. Thus industrialism, in the present condition of things, may become a cause of war, instead of a guarantee against it. Herr Johann von Bloch, the Russian State-Councillor, recently brought into prominence through the Conference at The Hague, has, in his gigantic work of six volumes, "War," tried to prove by a multitude of figures that war is impossible to-day between the Great Powers. I fear that facts would easily convince Herr von Bloch that he errs. Where there is a will there is a way. The horrors of war are the same for both contestants, and he who enters upon the combat with the greater assurance and with the more intense craving for victory, will bear them longer than his more timid opponent. It is this ability to "bear longer" that constitutes him the victor.

One argument is on the tongue of all defenders of peace; it is

the sentimental argument. It seems to be the strongest, but in reality it is the weakest. It appeals to our sympathies with reference to the manifold sufferings which war entails upon humanity; but it facilitates the answer for the advocates of war.

The spectacle of a corpse with yawning wounds or of a heap of maimed dead is horrible. It is heart-rending to see mothers weeping for their sons, wives for their husbands—for the bread-winners of their children. But are these spectacles produced by war alone? The sociologist, who overlooks broad fields of national life from a high standpoint, will answer that war is but one of many evils which cloud human existence; and by no means the worst, although the most melodramatic. As a moral phenomenon war is a crime. As a material phenomenon it by no means plays the part in ethnic and social economy which one would suppose *prima facie* before the first impression has been mathematically controlled by means of statistics.

War destroys many human lives. It is true. Yet not so many that the rate of mortality is perceptibly influenced thereby. In 1870-71 the German army lost, in round numbers, 40,000 men, killed in battle and by disease. At that time the rate of mortality in Germany was 27 in 1,000, or, with a population of 41,000,000, in round numbers, it was 1,107,000 per year. The 40,000 fatalities of the war increased this number about 3.6 per cent. and raised the mortality less than 1 in 1,000. The French losses were greater. They amounted to 88,000 men. But the epidemic of influenza in 1890 increased the rate of mortality in France to a greater extent than the war, although the war was one of the most sanguinary of the century. Typhoid fever has claimed more victims than all wars; and shipwrecks do not rank far below it. But typhoid fever could assuredly be prevented more easily than war, by a little concerted caution, and it is probable that a large number of shipwrecks could be traced to other causes than the irresistible forces of the elements.

War brings suffering upon the people—assuredly. But these sufferings are more rare and less painful than those which every great strike, every important lockout, every loss of labor, in consequence of commercial stagnation, carries in its train. In the sections of our great industrial centres inhabited by the proletariat more continuous misery exists than in camps or villages visited by war. The coal miner is exposed to greater dangers than the

soldier in the field. The stoker on the steamer of a tropical line suffers more intolerable bodily discomfort than the soldier on the most dreadful day of battle, and receives less moral and material compensation. The cynic might say that these hysterical lamentations are raised about war because its devastation strikes all, even the upper, strata of society; while the denunciation of other causes of sickness, pain and death is neglected, because their devastations are confined to the lower layers of the people.

The sentimental argument, therefore, will not down the advocates of war, for they defend themselves readily with ethnic data and statistics.

The emotion which sustains the warlike tendencies of cultured men is stronger than religion, which preaches love to one's neighbor; stronger than philosophy, which teaches the irrationality of brute force; stronger than morals and right, which civilized man pretends to recognize as the leading powers of his life. This feeling is ruthless egotism, which lusts merely for self-gratification, and remains untouched by the concept that the neighbor also has rights which deserve respect. All the culture of to-day is calculated to strengthen this egotism, not to weaken it. Art, poetry and fiction exalt the individual. Their ideal is "sovereign personality," which knows neither self-control nor duty toward the neighbor. This "sovereign personality," which is praised as the most perfect blossom of human development, is the worst enemy of all moral advance. Anarchism, the war of the classes with the masses, political and economical rings, patriotism which swells into Chauvinism and national megalomania, are but different aspects of this delirium of self-love.

If war is to disappear from national life, the individual must first feel his solidarity with the race in his heart, and not only recognize it as mere verbal wisdom; and the law of progress must be co-operation instead of competition. But in such a world-concept, which recognizes the individual only as a social being, as a civic entity (*Zoon politikon*) and imposes upon his subjectivity the law of the collective organism, the egotism of "sovereign personality" can scarcely find room.

MAX NORDAU.